

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Planning Committee held
at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 19th March,
2019 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor R. Edwards (Chairman)
County Councillor P. Clarke (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: L. Brown, A. Davies, D. Evans, M. Feakins,
R. Harris, J. Higginson, G. Howard, P. Murphy, M. Powell and
A. Webb

County Councillor P. Jones attended the meeting by invitation of the
Chair.

County Councillor J. Higginson left the meeting during consideration of application
DM/2018/01050 and did not return.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Hand	Head of Planning, Housing and Place-Shaping
Andrew Jones	Development Management Area Team Manager
Craig O'Connor	Development Management Area Team Manager
Matthew Phillips	Head of Law/ Monitoring Officer
Louise Corbett	Strategy and Policy Officer – Affordable Housing
Mark Davies	Highway Development Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors J. Becker, D. Blakebrough and D. Dovey

1. Mark of Respect

Before commencing the meeting the Planning Committee stood in silence as a mark of
respect for the victims of the terror attack that occurred in Christchurch, New Zealand.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

3. Application DM/2018/01050 - Residential development of up to 111 dwellings, new vehicular access from Monmouth Road and emergency vehicle access to Station Road, public open space and associated landscaping, engineering and infrastructure works. Land Development off Monmouth Road, Raglan, Monmouthshire

We considered the report of the application which was recommended for approval
subject to the conditions outlined in the report and subject to the Unilateral Undertaking
with heads of terms as previously agreed by Planning Committee in November 2019.

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The application has been called-in by Welsh Government and is therefore no longer before the Council to determine. However, the application is re-presented to the Planning Committee to consider due to the data error on housing completions against Local Development Plan (LDP) targets, included in the 20th September 2018 Council report and duplicated in the 6th November 2018 Planning Committee report for this item. The Committee was invited to consider the application afresh. In addition, the application has been reviewed against Planning Policy Wales 10 (PPW10), with particular regard to the sustainable transport hierarchy which is updated in national planning policy published since the Committee considered the application in November 2018.

The proposed development would make a contribution to the Authority's housing land availability shortfall and housing delivery shortfall. The 35% affordable housing would help address the significant affordability challenge facing communities, including the high level of affordable housing need throughout the County, including the local need in Raglan. The proposal is considered to comply with the 11 ground rules agreed by Council on 21st February 2019 and it is considered to accord with the policies set out in PPW10. It is recommended that Planning Committee confirms its in-principle support for the proposed development to inform the Council's position at the call-in appeal, and similarly that it notes and endorses the position regarding the sustainable transport hierarchy.

The local Member for Raglan attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following points:

- The local Member supports the LDP plan led process and supports the provision of affordable housing.
- However, the proposed application for 111 houses in Raglan is contrary to the LDP in its timing, scale and location. There are better options available to provide affordable housing such as smaller, more sustainable developments.
- Regarding affordable housing, ground rule 7 deals with the location of new developments.
- The issue regarding the lack of housing land in Monmouthshire is due to strategic housing allocations and are being developed far slower than predicted.
- The Council has owned sites that have not yet been developed, e.g. the site in Raglan for 45 houses, which does have a 35% affordable housing ratio.
- Due to viability issues, the affordable housing contributions are sometimes reduced from 35% or 25% reducing the numbers of affordable housing properties per development.
- Ground rule 8 requires that the size and mix of the proposed dwelling is both suitable for the location and seeks to address the demographic challenges. The Council report of the 21st February 2019 stated that the ground rule was

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complied with. However, the local Member disagrees, as the issue will not be addressed until the reserved matters stage. The Council report had also stated that the housing would not be reserved for any particular age group and there is no legitimate or appropriate way to enforce such a control. Ground rule 8 cannot be complied with at this stage.

- Ground rule 5 requires a development to be acceptable in other planning terms including the sustainable transport hierarchy. The report of the application refers to more bus timetables to show that this matter had been complied with. However, the site will be reliant on cars commuting out of the village. Buses will remain a vastly less attractive option as a means of transport for commuting. The sustainable element of ground rule 5 will not be met.
- More traffic will be forced onto the dangerous A40 junction. Further accidents have occurred there since the November 2018 Planning Committee meeting. This accident location needs to be addressed and acknowledged.
- The high street will also be put under considerable pressure, as would the whole local infrastructure.
- This site is wrong for development as it is considered not to meet at least three of the ground rules. The local Member asked that the committee opposes the development at the upcoming inquiry.

Councillor B. Willott, Chair of Raglan Community Council, attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following points:

- The Raglan public have noted that the County Council has been slow in bringing its own land forward for development and for affordable housing in particular.
- More should be done to hasten the development of the sites allocated already in the LDP. There would then be no need to allocate this site, which is outside of the LDP settlement boundary in Raglan.
- The next LDP could look more comprehensively at allocations in the context of the reducing population forecasts.
- Ground rule 6 deals with the scale of residential development. When the proposed 111 houses, as outlined in the application, are added to the 45 houses already approved for Chepstow Road, the resulting increase for Raglan cannot accord with the LDP Spatial Strategy Policy S1.
- At the Planning Committee meeting held on 6th November 2018, the level of growth for Raglan was described as subjective. Raglan Community Council re-states its view that a 28.4% level of growth cannot be described as a small amount of new housing development. Ground rule 6 is not complied with.

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- The consequences of such rapid growth would be damaging to village infrastructure.
- At the November 2018 Planning Committee meeting, it had been noted that new pupils living near to the school would eventually have priority access to the school. If the school couldn't be expanded then other pupils would have to be educated elsewhere. If those other pupils are from the Raglan community hinterland then their forced transport to other schools will result in more unsustainable journeys and damage to the social cohesion of the community. Ground rule 5 states that if infrastructure, such as the school, cannot be satisfactorily improved, permission should be refused.
- Raglan Community Council accepts the need for more homes, especially affordable homes, but not on the scale of this development.
- The Community Council asked the Planning Committee to adhere to the LDP and to refuse the application.

Ms. H. Ronchetti, representing Raglan Village Action Group, attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following points:

- Raglan Village Action Group welcomes that the LDP target figures have been corrected. However, an earlier response to concerns raised regarding the accuracy of the figures could have enabled the Planning Committee to consider the application afresh at the Planning Committee meeting on 4th December 2018 before the Welsh Government call in.
- The corrected target figures are now lower than first reported and there is an option to hasten the delivery of many readily available housing plots in the County which are preferential in planning terms and are within the LDP.
- The new site does not meet several of the ground rules.
- Raglan's heritage and sense of place needs to be taken into account.
- Ground rule 5 states that development must be acceptable in planning terms which, as stated in PPW10, includes the historic environment, the importance of conservation areas and their setting to the character of place and their value to cultural identity, economic vitality and local distinctiveness.
- The proposed housing development will destroy Raglan's last remaining link with the open countryside. Only in the southeast of the village does the open countryside join the historic conservation area. It is in this area where the village has its recreation sports area, its school and nursery and its fitness footpath. The fitness walk is enjoyed by residents of all ages.
- Putting 111 houses into this landscape will destroy the last and most important area of countryside available to the village.

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- Local residents are not against local housing but want to work with the Planning Department to ensure that the development is right for the village.
- Monmouthshire County Council has received over 150 letters and a petition signed by 520 local residents expressing their opposition to the proposed development.
- The Planning Committee was asked to consider refusal of the application.

Mr. G. Barton, the applicant's agent, attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair and outlined the following points:

- The issues that have been raised do not change the need for the proposed development.
- There remains a significant housing shortfall.
- There remains a need for affordable housing in Monmouthshire and specifically in Raglan.
- The County Council had agreed to reaffirm the ground rules against which applications such as this application should be considered in February 2019. The report of the application concludes that the scheme accords with the ground rules and is acceptable in all other planning terms.
- Many people in Monmouthshire struggle to access the housing market, which has been acknowledged by the County Council and is trying to rectify.
- The decision made in November 2018 and re-affirmed at Council in February 2019 was pragmatic, positive and forward thinking.
- If new housing is delayed until the completion of the LDP review, there is unlikely to be additional affordable housing provision in settlements such as Raglan until at least 2023. This means that those in need would be penalised for at least a further four years.
- The housing register indicates that a significant number of people are waiting for a home in the Raglan area. Approval of the proposed scheme will help alleviate this matter.
- Monmouthshire faces the challenge of rising market housing costs. Raglan has also experienced significant rising house prices.
- The focus of the proposed development has been to create a high quality design led scheme guided by the characteristics of the site and its surroundings. A significant amount of green space has been given over and its sustainable location near to the village centre.

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- The proposed development accords with new national policy. The applicant has embraced new sustainable transport policies including permitting to providing opportunities of electric charging across the site.
- The development will also provide for £800,000 of planning contributions which will benefit existing and new residents.
- Whilst the final decision is to be made by Welsh Government, the Planning Committee was asked to re-affirm its support for the application.

Having considered the report of the application and the views expressed, the following points were noted:

- The area of land in question will, at some point, come to Planning Committee for consideration for housing development. However, it might not come forward, at a future date, with 35% affordable housing provision.
- Concern was expressed that approval of this development might set a precedent for other larger developments to come forward that are not within the LDP.
- The scale of the proposed development is an issue and was considered to be too big, as it currently stands. If a scheme were to come forward on the site that was for a much smaller development, this might be favourable to the local community. This would result in fewer affordable houses coming forward but there is already a site for 45 homes approved by the Planning Committee within Raglan, yet to be developed, which will provide affordable housing units.
- In response to a suggestion made that the application be deferred pending the Welsh Government's review allowing the applicant to consider a more appropriate development for the site, the Head of Planning, Housing and Place Shaping informed the Committee that the application has been called in by Welsh Government and the process was ongoing. The Committee was asked to come to a decision in respect of the application, rather than defer it as the Authority would be required to present its stance at the call in appeal.
- In response to a question raised regarding whether the site could become an exception site, the Head of Planning Housing and Place Shaping informed the Committee that that policy still exists and there could be an exception site that would be 100% affordable housing provision. However, these tend to be for smaller scale developments. The reality regarding whether exception sites come forward is subject to viability and commercial aspects. The Authority would not receive a Section 106 contribution for such a site meaning other infrastructure demand would not be addressed.
- Some Members considered that it would be more appropriate if the developer came forward with an application for 30 to 40 dwellings at this site.
- The value of the land was questioned and its status as grade 3 land.

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- It was noted that a number of letters of support for the application had been received stating that it would provide affordable housing for future generations, the location was good for commuting and business in general, it would allow young people to move back into the village helping to re-balance the age of the village. Additional housing was required to support the demand and it was considered that the village could sustain the volume increase. There is currently a poor choice of housing in Raglan and the surrounding area and the 35% affordable housing provision was required.
- Concern was expressed regarding the location. In particular, the road safety concerns regarding the junction with the A40.
- Concern was expressed regarding the transport policy as, for example, it was suggesting that a resident using public transport from Raglan would need to take a 50 minute bus journey to Newport in order to take the next stage of their journey. If a resident was commuting from Raglan, Newport is about 20 miles away, Cardiff is 32 miles away and Bristol is 31 miles away. These are the main areas of employment as there are no major employers in the locality of Raglan. Traffic congestion occurs along St. Lawrence Road heading towards Chepstow at peak times.
- Since the removal of the Severn Bridges tolls, traffic flows have increased by 10% and it was predicted that in the next five years traffic flows would increase by 25%. There are issues relating to the infrastructure and accessibility of traffic in the South of the County.
- Monmouthshire is a commuting County.
- The infrastructure requirements have not been met.
- Concern was expressed regarding the wording in the report in respect of the electric motor vehicles. The charging points should be provided by the developer.
- A question had been asked at the Council meeting dated 21st February 2019 requesting clarification whether the 504 houses excluded the Caldicot and the Raglan Developments. The response received had indicated that these were excluded. However, the report of the application still refers to the 504 houses.
- At the Planning Committee meeting held on 6th November 2018 regarding this application, reference had been made that the land was grade 3a and two thirds of the land was that type. The new Planning Policy Wales edition 10 states that prime agricultural land should not be used for development unless there is an overriding need for development. It was considered that for infrastructure reasons, this application should not be supported.

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- The site is located outside of the development boundary and would add a significant amount of development to a village community changing the character and nature of the community.
- In response to some issues raised, the Head of Planning Housing and Place Shaping informed the Committee that there are two figures outlined in the report of the application, there is a 3.9 year land supply and the 504 projected housing shortfall against the LDP 4500 target with 38 of those being affordable homes against the 960 target. All of these figures are based on the April 2018 joint local housing availability study and they project forward what is happening in the next five years. The 504 figure looks at a period up to the end of 2021. Therefore, the figure of 504 does not include the Church Road application neither does it include this application.
- LDP policy S2 identified that Raglan will take 45 houses over the plan period. Compared with the LDP allocation and the size of Raglan. The scale of development proposed is disproportionate and would be more appropriate for a large town.
- The scale of the residential development is nearly three times the size of the LDP allocation. Concern was expressed that the ground rules were being interpreted to make the proposed scheme fit.
- Raglan is not a sustainable location with public transport being limited to sporadic bus services.
- Employment sites and secondary school provision are some distance away which would generate commuting by private car and be contrary to policy S16.
- The shortfall in housing is not as great as previously indicated and where there is a shortfall this has largely arisen as a result of development not happening in the south of the County and on the Council's own sites.
- With a 3.9 year land supply, this allows developers to come forward with proposed developments outside of the LDP. The proposed development at Raglan will provide 35% affordable housing provision.
- There is demand for housing in the area and the proposed development will be located close to facilities.

The local Member for Raglan summed up as follows:

- 111 houses built in one development in a rural, historical village is not suitable for this location.
- Raglan should not be the answer to address the County's housing problems.

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- A development to provide 45 houses in Raglan has been approved with potentially more development to come forward.
- Residents are in favour of smaller, sustainable developments within the village.

It was proposed by County Councillor M. Feakins and seconded by County Councillor G. Howard that we be minded to refuse application DM/2018/01050 as the application is contrary to Planning Policies S1, S2, S16 and H4.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

For refusal	-	5
Against refusal	-	6
Abstentions	-	0

The proposition was not carried.

We resolved that application DM/2018/01050 be approved subject to conditions, including the additional conditions outlined in the report, and subject to the Unilateral Undertaking with heads of terms, as previously agreed in November 2018.

The meeting ended at 11.37 am.